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## CASTLES IN THE AIR ;

OR,

THE DAY-DREAMS OF PHILIP FORESTER,

A SHEPHERD.

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On this perhaps,  
This *peradventure*, infamous for lies,  
As on a rock of adamant, we build  
Our mountain-hopes.

YOUNG.

SOME minds are apt to employ themselves in rearing fabrics of unsubstantial and unattainable bliss. This is a harmless species of delirium, so far as it regards our neighbours, but by no means a fortunate propensity for us, that are in the habit of indulging it. "Every desire, however innocent," says Dr. Johnson, "grows dangerous, as by long indulgence it becomes ascendant in the mind." The fancy, habituated to these aerial excursions, finds out a region very unlike our earth, and peopled by beings much superior to mankind.—There the sun is never clouded ; there every eye sees by intuition the merits of a brother ; every heart glows with generosity ; and every hand is stretched forth in aid of the helpless. This is undoubtedly a most desirable state : but when the vision flies, and the dreamer still finds himself a weak child of mortality, surrounded on every side by the scornful, the deceitful, and uncharitable, he too frequently becomes dispirited, and sinks into a sort of despondency, that quite unfits him for all vigorous exertion. It is from this cause, I apprehend, that poets are so often unfortunate in life. By the peculiar nature of their studies, the imagination is kept in continual employment and excitement, and thus acquires an influence over the mind, which the other faculties, by degrees, lose all power of controlling. Their feelings, too, never being allowed to rest, become painfully acute ; and the slightest disappointment, which to other men would be a trifle, is sufficient to drive the poor poets to utter despair. This is not so frequently the case, indeed, with the great masters of the lyre, whose poetic sensibilities are tempered by philosophical knowledge ; as with those who, in careless indolence, delight themselves like madmen, with the unearthly creation of their own brain. As every man is happy or miserable, according to the moderation or extravagance of his hopes and wishes, the visionary projector can scarcely be considered as one of the most comfortable beings in existence.

Though I am well aware of the evil tendency of this habit, I cannot altogether overcome it. The other day I enjoyed a very delightful vision. I had, some time previously, taken

the liberty of conveying a few of my small poems to our clergyman, who is the literary oracle of his illiterate neighbourhood, and politely requesting him to give me his opinion of them ; I called upon him, in the course of a week afterwards, and was received more affably than on any former occasion. He had usually allowed me to creep to a seat behind the parlour door ; but, on this occasion, he seated me in the arm-chair, directly opposite to himself ; and, after laying one leg over the other, and assuming a grave clerical air, he uttered with his hollow voice, these gratifying words :—" Mr. Forester, I have read your little poems with real pleasure. They contain both spirit and feeling in no ordinary degree ; and they are entirely free from the glare of false ornaments, which is the general fault of young writers, and to which, indeed, almost every poet of the present day, is miserably addicted. I should be very sorry to encourage any man in a hopeless undertaking ; but I will venture to say that you possess talents, which, by proper cultivation, will raise you to poetical fame." I believe, I made a suitable reply ; but the hopes and expectations that flashed upon my mind, like dazzling sunshine, have driven it entirely from my remembrance. On my arrival home, I immediately retired, with particular satisfaction, beneath my favourite tree, and composed, in a few seconds I suppose, a very beautiful volume of poems.— They were no sooner composed than published. It is impossible for me to convey to any other man, the least idea of the transports I enjoyed, in meditating on my own importance. I beheld the old and the wise, the young and the beautiful, poring over my book with unutterable delight ; now holding up their hands in perfect astonishment ; and now expressing what happiness they would feel, in being honoured with the author's acquaintance. I heard a number of the sweetest words, breathed from the most beautiful and tempting lips—" O what an amiable creature !—what an affectionate soul !—what a charming man he must be !" How delightful it is to be a fool at times ! One moment like this, is worth a whole eternity of the cold-blooded comfort of ordinary existence !

But hold—my fate is not yet determined—the Review has not appeared, and I am perfectly aware, that my enthusiastic admirers dare not promulgate their sentiments, till a voice, like that of Pythagoras, issue from behind a curtain, when the implicit believers, catching the watch-word, shall carry it from one to another, until it reaches the uttermost part of the earth. But here comes the Review ; I fly to the contents—Art. 2. " Poems, by Philip Forester." I dart like lightning to the proper page, and begin—" We cannot say too much in praise of the merits of this little volume before us. It is as

promising as the author's most ardent friends could desire ; and though an inexperienced hand be observable in many of the pieces, yet, upon the whole, the beauty of the sentiments, the freshness of the imagery, the genuineness of the feelings, and the felicity of the language, are truly admirable, and peculiarly gratifying. Indeed, these spring-blossoms of genius, as they may be properly called, give a pleasing and indisputable promise, of the richness and abundance of the future harvest." Delightful ! Delightful ! My glory is chartered—the mandate hath gone forth ; and I defy all worldly competitors to prevent my entrance into the temple of fame—I even defy Time himself to efface the shining characters of my name, which are therein written by the pen of immortality. O how my parents shall rejoice ! I run to them ; " Look here ! look here ! " My father lays aside his Bible, wipes his spectacles, and begins to read ; while my mother stops the monotonous hum of her spinning-wheel, and with tears in her eyes, greedily devours every word. O how delightful it is to be distinguished, before the affectionate souls whom we love have gone to that undiscovered country, where the voice of our praise cannot reach them ! But how shall I be able to bear up, under the many honours that shall be heaped upon me ! To be esteemed by the wise, beloved by the good, worshipped by the young, caressed by the beautiful—is certainly sufficient to turn any man's head, as it has frequently done, and make the poetical enthusiast a very fit inmate for bedlam, as he has often been.

Lo, a letter ! Johnson had the sagacity to discover that we shall receive no letters in the grave ; and I had the folly to think, that such a thing would never reach this obscure place. But I forget that I am now a great man. O, it comes from Sir Walter Openheart, the universal patron of unpretending merit—like mine ! " Sir, I have had the good fortune to meet with your interesting little volume ; and, understanding, by a friend, that the world has used you rather unkindly, I am anxious to have you promoted to some situation worthy of your abilities, in repayment of the high gratification that your poems have afforded me. I shall be proud of a call from you, as soon as it suits your conveniency. I am, Sir, your sincere admirer and humble servant, Wal. Openheart." I immediately wait upon the Baronet, and he at once discovers, that I possess talents, which even my inimitable poems could not have led him to expect. In a very short time, I am appointed to a lucrative employment, and enabled to move in the sphere of fashionable life. I am delighted with the attentions that are every where paid to me ; and by the inexpressibly pleasant reflection, that the ignorant boobies,

who wanted penetration to discover my rising merit, and who seemed to rejoice over my misfortunes, will now, on my exaltation, be poisoning their every comfort, by the venom of their own envious hearts. I fall desperately in love with a beautiful young lady, who is passionately fond of my poetry, and who is altogether overcome by the charms of my conversation. I go to her father's house, to make a full declaration of my sentiments. I am ushered into the parlour—the lady enters—I rise to salute her, and—— But hark! my father's voice! "Philip, don't you see our flock in the very middle of Walter Fardingale's barley? Make haste and drive them out." "Immediately, Sir—I was just going to shake hands with Miss——." "With whom, you blockhead! That is a thorn bush you have seized upon." And so it was; for it took the whole afternoon to pluck the prickles out of my fingers; and, during this employment, I began to think that the ordinary cares of life demand the first attention, even of a poet.

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## SENTIMENTAL RAMBLES IN ULSTER;

During a Week's Saturnalia, in the Summers of 1823 and 24: by J. M., Schoolmaster in the Parish of Drumsaillach.

## No. I.

"AND this," said my companion, "is the city of Armagh: the head-quarters of a regiment of foot, and grand depot for the artillery of the Established Church in Ireland!" I once more examined the man on the blind horse, as he uttered this; and the broad-leafed hat, jack-boots, and scuffed blue surtout, which did not altogether correspond with the smooth suit of black beneath—the portmanteau on the crupper, and the saddle-bags hanging on each side—but above all, a certain expression of countenance, half devotional, and half ironical and waggish—convinced me, that these appurtenances, which I had hitherto set down as belonging to a Catholic Priest, most indubitably indicated a Wesleyan preacher. "A good Catholic," thought I, would speak with more reverence of even a bastard scion of the Holy Mother Church.\* " 'Tis the Sabbath evening," said my companion, "as I have more than once reminded you. The bells of the cathedral are ringing for the evening service. But look—here also is Vanity Fair, and Satan holds a holiday."

\* At the time this was written, I had not even heard of Father M'Sweeney—whose extreme moderation, in a late discussion, has induced the Dublin and London Magazine to say, that he "deserves the honour of being called the modern O'Leary."